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ABSTRACT

The problem of effective staff use in a college department of physical education is addressed in this paper. Some of the advantages and disadvantages frequently associated with the full-time teacher, the part-time instructor, the graduate assistant, and the paraprofessional are examined. It is suggested that careful assignment of faculty, using the best qualities of each type of personnel where they are most effective, will strengthen the department and reinforce the skills each individual has to offer. (JD)

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Staffing Patterns

Mid America College and University Conference

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By

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West Virginia University

Thank you Dr. Price; friends and follow professionals. It is a personal pleasure to be before you today to discuss the topic of Staffing Patterns for the General Physical Education Program. To me there are as many diverse patterns as there are colleges and universities offering activity programs. No one model will fit the needs of any school. However, the available options are quite similar. That is, the courses may be staffed by full-time faculty, by part-time faculty, by paraprofessionals, by graduate teaching assistants, or even by other undergraduate students. As a group, each type of instructor brings identifiable traits, habits, strengths and weaknesses, notwithstanding the many individual differences among the categories involved. Although it is generally unwise to categorize people and assign broad characteristics to each group, let us examine some of the advantages and disadvantages frequently associated with the full-time teacher, the part-time instructor, the graduate assistant and the paraprofessional.

Full-Time Staff

Any administrator of a general physical education program would treasure a staff of full-time faculty members who were tenured, well trained, skilled, enthusiastic, interested, modern in their viewpoints, and up-to-date in all

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the new activities which have appeal for the undergraduate student of the 70's. However few administrators have this luxury. One of the major topics of discussions in the profession today deals with managing the problems created by those who are full-time and tenured but who have antiquated skills or skills in activities no longer sought by or appealing to undergraduate students. These faculty, who psychologically cannot manage a co-educational class, often frighten students or are alarmed by them; either way, the rapport between them and the youth of the 70's is uncertain. And, too, infrequently there is the attitude of some, who perhaps are involved in research and/or graduate teaching, that activity instruction is subordinate and has low status when consideration is given for promotion, tenure and merit. Add to this those who are out of shape, overweight and in need of retreading and the rosy picture of all full-time faculty as a staffing pattern fades a bit.

Part-Time Faculty

Recruitment of part-time faculty to instruct in the general program produces the same advantages as with any new staff addition, i.e., these individuals, properly selected, contribute a freshness, a vitality and the specific expertise needed. Budgetarily, a school can usually service more students at less cost with part-time faculty than with full-time staff. However, these budget allotments often fluctuate and, with recessions, the part-time person is severed first. Properly recruited part-time staff do contribute specialized and unique skills and many furnish a 7/8 work load for only half-time salary.

However, part-time faculty are at a disadvantage. Generally, they become the forgotten staff member; even the secretaries neglect to distribute

announcements to them. An administrator finds that employment and direction of part-time faculty is time-consuming and frustrating. Special efforts must be made to acquaint these people, who have a high turn-over rate, with the policies and procedures of the school and program. In addition, other faculty usually are not cognizant of the presence of part-time faculty and, therefore are not of assistance in incorporating such staff into overall faculty duties and priviledges. Finally, if not carefully recruited, this spurious faculty member will present all the same problems as demonstrated by the worn out or antiquated skilled full-time staff member.

Paraprofessionals

This is a person who, by this speaker's definition, is not a trained teacher, physical educator or college graduate from a related program. This person is usually a part-time staff member employed to service specific activity areas where the physical education faculty expertise is lacking. Their mission is to broaden the offerings of a program. Usually they instruct in courses labeled, for want of a more descriptive title, "exotic"; that is, those not usually associated with the typical physical education activity offerings. The martial arts, ballet, belly dancing, and similar areas are often tutored by these individuals. Their employment not only permits a greater variety of offerings, but also adds a highly specialized skill to the total competencies of the faculty. Yet the paraprofessional suffers from all the problems associated with the part-time faculty. In addition, this individual has a lack of understanding of the college milieu, little emotional attachment for the school and, perhaps, is very weak in teaching methods and in evaluative procedures. Where the older full-time faculty in need of retreading often

frighten or irritate undergraduates, the paraprofessional, may permit behavior on the part of students which is inimical to quality learning.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Young, recently graduated majors in physical education bring to the instructional situation enthusiasm, new skills, skills in activity areas popular with students, energy, drive, few outside commitments and an ability to develop meaningful relationships with their students. They are a tabula rosa on which wise administrators write a developmental program to insure the calibre of instruction desired.

Instruction, however, is only a part of graduate assistants foci and many succumb to the pressures of their studies. As with all part-time staff, they are ignorant of departmental policies and procedures and often are not accepted as co-workers by older staff members. Unfortunately, some even have very poor measurememt and evaluation tools; others are incapable of motivating their students. They violate policies which they were not responsible for devising; they are unstable, party too much and demand much in supervision by other staff. Always it must be borne in mind that graduate assistants are first students and then instructors; and, as such the administrator wages a constant struggle for continuity and for recruiting, training and replacing those who matriculate.

A Solution

So what is the staffing pattern to be? After careful examination of the alternatives, most school officials will make very pragmatic decisions. They will use the pattern which works best in the situation, then they will try to minimize the disadvantages presented by each individual. With your permission

a short overview of the situation at West Virginia University will be presented in an effort to illustrate a pragmatic staffing pattern.

The School of Physical Education has three departments; General Physical Education, Professional Physical Education and Safety Studies. The Graduate Studies area is a fairly autonomous unit under the Professional Physical Education Department. The General Program services a two semester university requirement for all freshmen students. In addition, the department is responsible for five clubs (4 performing groups and one competitive), the Preparatory Children's Programs of Ballet, Creative Dance, Gymnastics and Aquatics and the direct service programs for the university and the community. This latter usually takes the form of developing clinics and workshops for schools and teachers or offering Continuing Education courses for the community.

In the activity program, the department offers about 61 different activities, most of them at the beginner level unless the more advanced level is specified. All classes are co-educational and are taught in many facilities across our two campuses. The fall enrollment in 170 sections was 4,260 and this spring in 173 sections we have problems with facilities so the total decreased to 3,200.

Staffing these classes uses the services of 22 of the full-time faculty, two paraprofessional part-time people and 23 graduate assistants. Other part-time, graduate assistants and paraprofessionals are utilized in the Children's Preparatory Program and in the Continuing Education classes. The entire school is operated on an "across-the-board" concept. That is, if a faculty member has an expertise and it is needed by one or more of the sub-units of the school, that faculty member will be assigned to teach in those areas. The locale or home base for their teaching activity does not affect their opportunities for promotion, tenure or merit increases. There is no caste system in the faculty.

In fact, one of the major goals which directly relates to these practices is the attainment of the Outstanding Teacher Award. Often those with a large number of instructional duties in the General Program are winners.

What does this mean to the General Program? The overall basic thrust of the department is to meet the interests and desires of the student body as best they can be ascertained. You are welcome to a copy of the most recent survey just completed by our students. Next year's schedule will be developed from this information. Any activity requested will be offered if 1) it truly has active, physical components and 2) it is educational and instructional. Not offered are those courses which may be fine physically recreative types of activities, but present instructional/educational problems. The Recreation-Intramural Department is much better equipped to satisfy students needs in these areas such as basketball and football.

Solving Problems

With full-time faculty who lack skills in the newer areas, it is strongly suggested that they participate in in-service training opportunities. It is easy to show staff that if students don't elect those areas of the faculty member's competency, then developing a full-time teaching load is difficult if the faculty member does not re-tread. Putting new staff in the same areas or vicinity as some of the older faculty seems to have advantages both ways. One group becomes rejuvenated and spirited, the other profits from the experience and steadiness of their cohorts. For these reasons and others some schools have a rule that all faculty teach in the activity program. It is a common experience in schools to have graduate or the so-called "theory" teaching faculty request assignment to service classes, even on an overload basis, for these reasons and for personal health principles.

Full-time faculty can be retrained. Administrators need to encourage them and may subsidize them to attend short courses, workshops and clinics to develop expertise in one of the newer fields. Administrators must be supportive of the older staff, have great patience and give encouragement in order for them to be secure enough to attempt to retread. It is frightening to begin a new career after 40, but the facts of life are that to hold a teaching position, one must be expert in the more popular areas of activity. Schools can also employ visiting speakers and consultants, who among other contributions can disucss the attitudes and concerns of the younger generation so to aid in developing rapport between instructors and students. It is also time to put away ideas of a hierarchy of status of programs in physical education. Nothing harms the image of the profession or our instructional programs as much as the negative, derogatory statements made by those within our ranks. It is time to say to these individuals, "Love it or Leave it." Physical Education has something of value to offer and if this attitude is taught and caught, others will believe in us also.

To bolster the deficiencies of full-time specialists, paraprofessionals and graduate assistants need to be carefully recruited and thoroughly indoctrinated. Depending on the specialized skills needed and the available pool of talent, any of the three patterns of staffing will suffice. Activities like the martial arts, specialized outdoor skills, ballet, scuba, etc. can be more than adequately instructed by part-time specialists. However, after careful recruiting and selection, a strong training program must be initiated and maintained. Administrators should recruit according to the school's needs, develop an orientation program, and continue the educational process with a series of seminars. The West Virginia University pattern can be seen on this

transparency. All new staff and graduate assistants participate in a 5 day orientation program designed to develop the six major competencies noted (e.g. become familiar with facilities, procedures, policies, routines, instructional goals, and other staff). Throughout the year a specific course is taught, Teaching Practicum, in which the topics are related to the staff's recognized needs.

In summation, I believe it is foolish to use or expect to use one staffing pattern. Schools must use the best instructors advantageously. Schools need to look to their local communities as well as to the state, region or the country to find those people, be they citizens, paraprofessionals, graduate assistants or full-time faculty who can produce the best instruction for the students. No single staffing pattern is the answer. Several methods of staffing have been alluded to herein; you are challenged to suggest others and other successful ways to meet the needs of students in the basic activity program.